6 November 1968

1. It's fairly easy to get rather accurate data on the quantitative aspects of the Agency's information processing effort. The list of data suggested for a Computer Application Registry or Control purposes is almost totally quantitative. The usefulness of this data to IPS would seem to be fairly limited. It will provide good insight into hardware utilization and a reasonably good estimate of manpower utilization. Current hardware and man- power utilization is a control element but not necessarily a prime control element. We know now for example, that the utilization trend is upward and that at some future point we will exceed our information processing capacity. The only thing the data asked for will provide is a more accurate estimate of when we will exceed capacity. This is important but not very effective problem solving.

2. It is my understanding that with the exception of items 4 and 12 these data are routinely collected and reported by OCS. A summary should suffice for most IPS purposes.

3. It would seem to me that IPS should be providing some leadership to the hard job of determining how to develop qualitative data for supporting management decision about Agency information processing projects. Until these guidelines are developed we will always be involved in an endless spiral of increasing demand and increasing capability.

4. The following proposals are presented for arguments sake but also with some conviction that they represent a reasonably pro- ductive approach.

    a. Context

        Information Processing only makes sense when examined from the customers (users) point of view. Support Directorate experience has been that users rarely identify a problem incor- rectly. Their definition of the problem may not be complete and their solutions aren't always the best but after all is said and done the problem remains much as it was. Much of our present difficulty exists because the customer and the computer personnel focused on discrete problems and solved them. This separate and
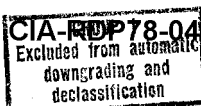
sequential approach to problem solving can only lead to a
continuing upward utilization spiral. A management overview
is required to ~~place~~ the problem in its appropriate context,
provide an objective review of alternatives and recommend
to management, not ADP management, a preferred course of action.

  b. Priorities

     So long as management, ADP management included,
avoids some kind of ranking we will continue to compete among
ourselves for resources. There is no simple way to develop
priorities but until office priorities are developed into
directorate priorities and directorate priorities are arranged
into Agency priorities no reasonable resource allocation can
be determined. The Agency 5 Year ADP Plan has established
priorities and allocations which appear to be reasonable. What
additional steps should be taken to make the Agency Plan an
action document rather than an academic exercise? This would
be a most appropriate question for the Information Processing
Staff and the Directorate IP Coordinators.

  c. Documentation

     It goes without saying that Information Processing
systems require good documentation. We tend to ignore the
equally important requirement to document proposals for utiliz-
ing the Information Processing resource. The Agency 5 Year Plan
calls for "complete and open disclosure of plans." What form
should this complete and open disclosure take? In the Support
Directorate we are attempting to provide the following kind of
~~information~~: *documentation*

     (1) A thorough analysis of the system.

          This analysis in narrative and flow chart
     form identifies what the requirements are and what must
     be done to satisfy the requirement. We assume the
     validity of the requirement until completion of analysis.
     We do not specify how the requirement will be handled.

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(2) A "staff study" stating

Purpose or objectives

Relationship to on-going projects

Relevant facts (from systems analysis)

Discussion of alternatives

including costs

equipment

personnel

etc.

Recommended alternative

Time frame and target dates

5. Given these elements, context, priority and documentation we should be able to arrive at informed management decision. The important thing here is that these are not decisions made by Information Processing managers. The Information Processing Staff along with all others concerned with Information Processing should focus on how to provide Agency management with the capability for informed decision making. Requiring the kind of data reflected in the computer application or control registry does not move us in that direction.